



PRESS RELEASE
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PUTNAM AND ALACHUA COUNTY DRUG RING BUSTED
IN SPIN-OFF FROM "OPERATION CRESCENT MOON"

Jacksonville, Florida - United States Attorney Paul I. Perez, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration Mark R. Trouville, Miami Division and Sheriff Dean Kelly, Putnam County Sheriff's Office today announced the arrests of 11 residents of Putnam and Alachua Counties pursuant to criminal complaints charging them with conspiracy to distribute cocaine, cocaine base (commonly known as "crack"), and marihuana. The defendants are: Noe Becerra, 37 years old, of Hawthorne; Frank Marquez, 37 years old, of Interlachen; Angel Diaz Martinez, 19 years old, of Interlachen; Walter Fullard, 61 years old, of Interlachen; Joe Lee Norris, 59 years old, of Hampton; Raymond Ruiz, Jr., 23 years old, of Hawthorne; James Lowell Rush, Jr., 43 years old, of Hawthorne; Patricia King, 36 years old, of Gainesville; Tony King, 41 years old, of Gainesville; Thomas O'Steen Monroe, 27 years old, of Hawthorne; and David Keller Griffin, 64 years old, of Interlachen. The maximum penalties the defendants face if convicted are at least 10 years' imprisonment up to life imprisonment, and a fine of up to \$4 million.

According to the complaints, this investigation began as a spin-off from a previous investigation and prosecution of members of a drug organization that had operated in the Crescent City area. Law enforcement had dubbed that investigation "Operation Crescent Moon." The spin-off investigation arose from information provided by cooperating defendants in the previous case, as well as information provided by other cooperating individuals. The investigation progressed through undercover purchases of drugs, physical surveillance, analysis of telephone call records, and, ultimately, court-authorized wire taps of several telephones. The complaint alleges that the amount of drugs involved in the conspiracy was at least 5 kilograms of cocaine, at least 5 grams of crack cocaine, and at least 100 kilograms of marihuana. According to the complaint, pursuant to the arrests of Noe Becerra and Frank Marquez, approximately 200 pounds of marihuana was seized from a "stash" house on County Road 325 in Alachua County, as well as a large sum of U.S. currency. Also, an additional 3 kilograms of cocaine was seized yesterday from the "stash" house on County Road 325 during a follow-up investigation.

Special Agent in Charge Mark R. Trouville said, "These arrests demonstrate the commitment of DEA to infiltrate and dismantle organized groups that traffic drugs in our communities. We would like to commend all our state and local partners especially, Sheriff Dean Kelly and the Putnam County Sheriff's Office for their efforts, which contributed to the enormous success of this investigation."

U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez stated, "The combined efforts of DEA and the Putnam County Sheriff's Office have put another organized drug trafficking group out of business today. Our office is committed to prosecuting those who bring illegal drugs to the streets of our community."

Sheriff Kelly stated, "We welcome the added resources of the federal, state and other local agencies who have made this operation a success. This spirit of cooperation and hard work has taken drugs and drug dealers off the streets of our community."

The case was investigated by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, the Gainesville Police Department and the North Florida HIDTA Task Force comprised of DEA, Jacksonville, Clay County, Nassau County, Baker County Sheriff's Offices, Fernandina Beach Police Department, Jacksonville Beach Police Department, FDLE and ICE. The case will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Julie Savell and Scot Morris.

A criminal complaint is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.